



News Release

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Fish and Wildlife Service Will Delay Planning for Proposed Lower San Pedro River Refuge
Agency Shifts to a Landscape Scale Partnership Approach to Land Protection

The Southwest Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will temporarily suspend work on the proposed Lower San Pedro River National Wildlife Refuge until further notice. This decision is driven in part by a new national approach for establishing new national wildlife refuges whereby proposals for new national wildlife refuges are preceded by a much broader landscape-level assessment of conservation opportunities and needs. New guidance states that, with limited exceptions, no new national wildlife refuges should be developed until after a landscape-level assessment has been completed.

The proposal, originally announced to the public in 2012, sought to establish a locally collaborative-driven national wildlife refuge along the riparian corridor of the Lower San Pedro River (San Pedro) from the Narrows to its confluence with the Gila River. The San Pedro River contains a Globally Important Bird Area and is located at the convergence of four major ecosystems—the Sierra Madre and Rocky Mountains, and the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts. This convergence contributes to its high biodiversity values. It is recognized as one of the primary migratory bird corridors in the West, with estimates of up to four million birds that annually traverse the corridor between Mexico and U.S. and Canadian breeding areas.

The Service remains committed to support protection of these biological values and this decision does not prevent Service staff from continuing to work with residents and other interested stakeholders within the Lower San Pedro River watershed to provide technical assistance or other conservation support – including support for ongoing efforts of landowner-driven groups in the area.

No time frame has been established for development of a landscape-level assessment or the size of the assessment area, but completion of the assessment is likely to significantly delay future work on the proposed refuge.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.